GIANT-SIZE ASTONISHING X-MEN

JOSS WHEDON • JOHN CASSADAY

MARVEL
AXM 24.5
GS 1

Previously in ASTONISHING X-MEN:

On the alien Breakworld, the X-Men have reached a final showdown with the forces of Powerlord Kruun. With Agent Brand's S.W.O.R.D soldiers as backup, the X-Men pierced Kruun's base and reached the planet's power core. There Colossus learned who was behind the strange prophesy that foretold his destruction of the planet -- Aghanne, the Breakworld rebel who preached compassion to the masses.

Meanwhile, Kitty Pryde phased into the Retaliator, a ten-mile-long missile Kruun had pointed at Earth. She attempted to disable it but soon realized that it had no inner circuitry, only miles of thick alien steel that severely exhausted her. When she reached its hollow tip, she collapsed from the effort and seconds later, the launch sequence began. That's when Beast realized the Retaliator was no missile at all, but a bullet.

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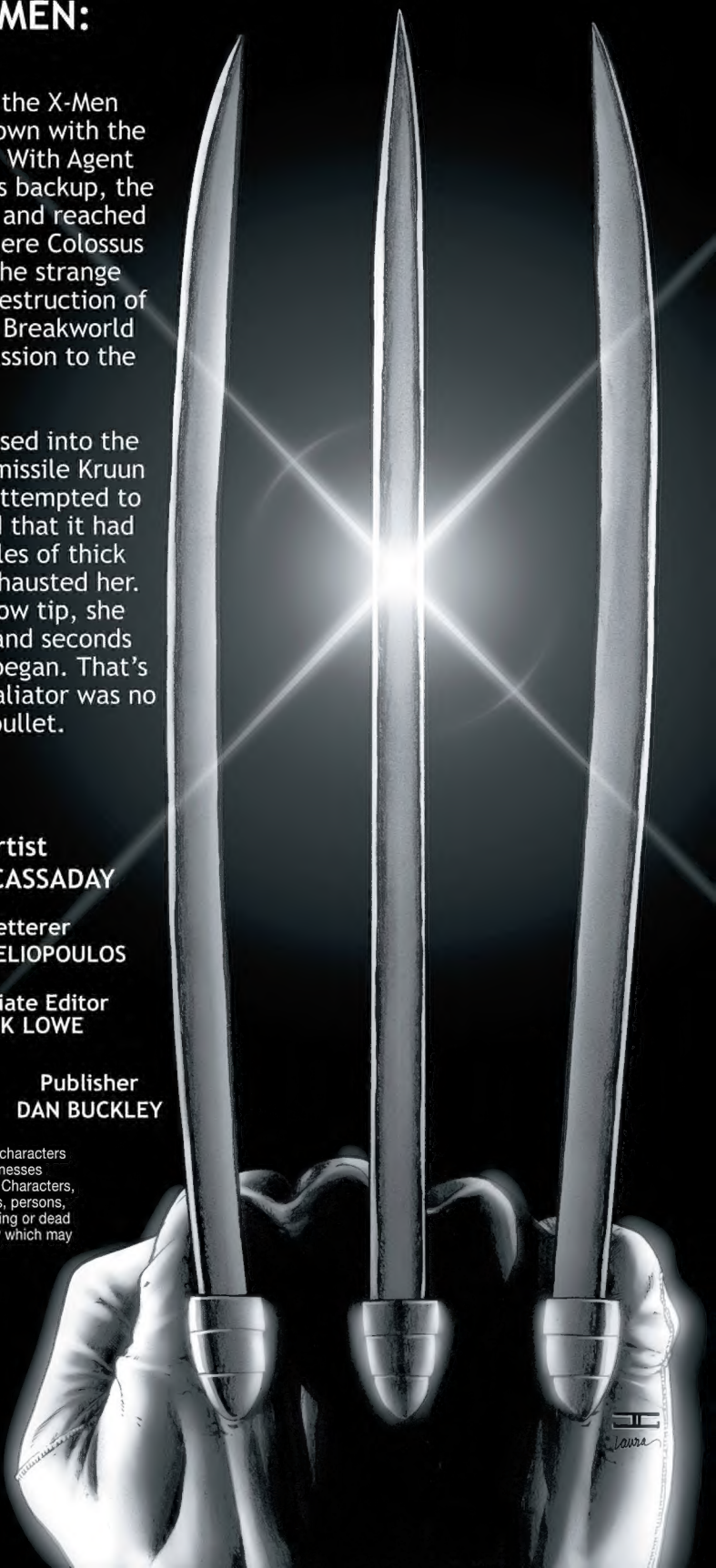


YOU CAN'T SAY "I LOVE NEW YORK".

TOURISTS CAN LOVE NEW YORK. ME? WHO GREW UP HERE? WHO'S LIVED HERE MY WHOLE LIFE, WHO'S CRAWLED OVER EVERY STONE AND SWUNG OFF EVERY CORNICE...I *AM* NEW YORK.

IT'S IN ME, IN MY BLOOD, LIKE A DISEASE...YOU KNOW, LIKE A BLOOD DISEASE BUT A GOOD ONE, LIKE A HAPPY...CANCER...

SO CLEARLY I WAS NOT BITTEN BY A RADIOACTIVE *POET*. BUT YOU GET WHAT I'M SAYING.

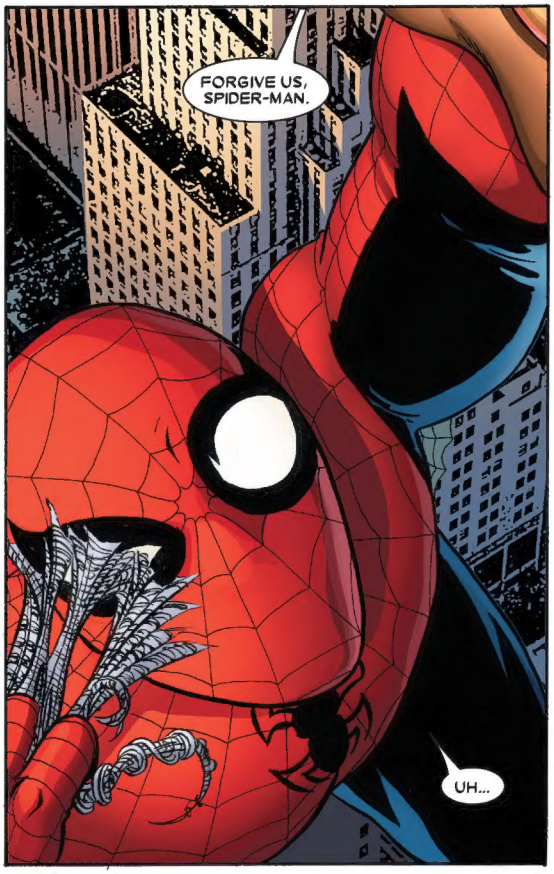
WHEN YOU'RE PART OF A GREATER WHOLE... WHEN YOU'RE... ENMESHED...

...YOU KNOW WHEN SOMETHING'S COMING.

BAMF
GAAH!
MOST OF THE TIME.

HEADS UP!
OW! WHOAH!
SOME OF THE TIME.

NONONO-- HEY WINDY NOW--
FORGET IT.


FORGIVE US, SPIDER-MAN.
UH...

WOW.
I ALL OF A SUDDEN FORGIVE YOU.
IT IS COMING SOON, AND WE DIDN'T WISH YOU TO BE STARTLED.
I WAS GONNA LAND ON MY FEET, FYI, AND IF YOU DON'T WANT TO STARTLE A GUY DON'T TELEPORT IN HIS FACE A HUNDRED FEET ABOVE THE CITY.
YOU COULD MAYBE TEXT.
ENTSCHULDIGEN SIE, BITTE.
NO, I'M ONLY FORGIVING HER.
SHE DIDN'T MEAN STARTLED BY US, WEB-BUTT.
FUNNY. NOT "HA-HA" FUNNY, BUT...
OH. STARTLED.
NOW I GET IT.
NOT SURE I WANT IT...

NEITHER ARE WE.

BUT IT WILL TAKE US WHERE WE HAVE TO GO.

"OH, THIS IS *NEVER* GOOD."

YOU GET THIS MANY BIG GUNS IN ONE ROOM NOT CIVILLY WARRING, IT'S EITHER THE END OF THE WORLD, OR...

...I DON'T HAVE AN "OR".

ORORO.

GOOD TO SEE YOU. IS THE PROFESSOR HERE?

NOT INVITED. NO ONE WILL SAY WHY.

THE MUTANTS ARE KEPT IN THE DARK, AS ALWAYS. IT'S OUR PEOPLE OUT THERE--

OUT WHERE?

--AND STILL THEY TELL US NOTHING.

THEY WILL TELL *ME.*

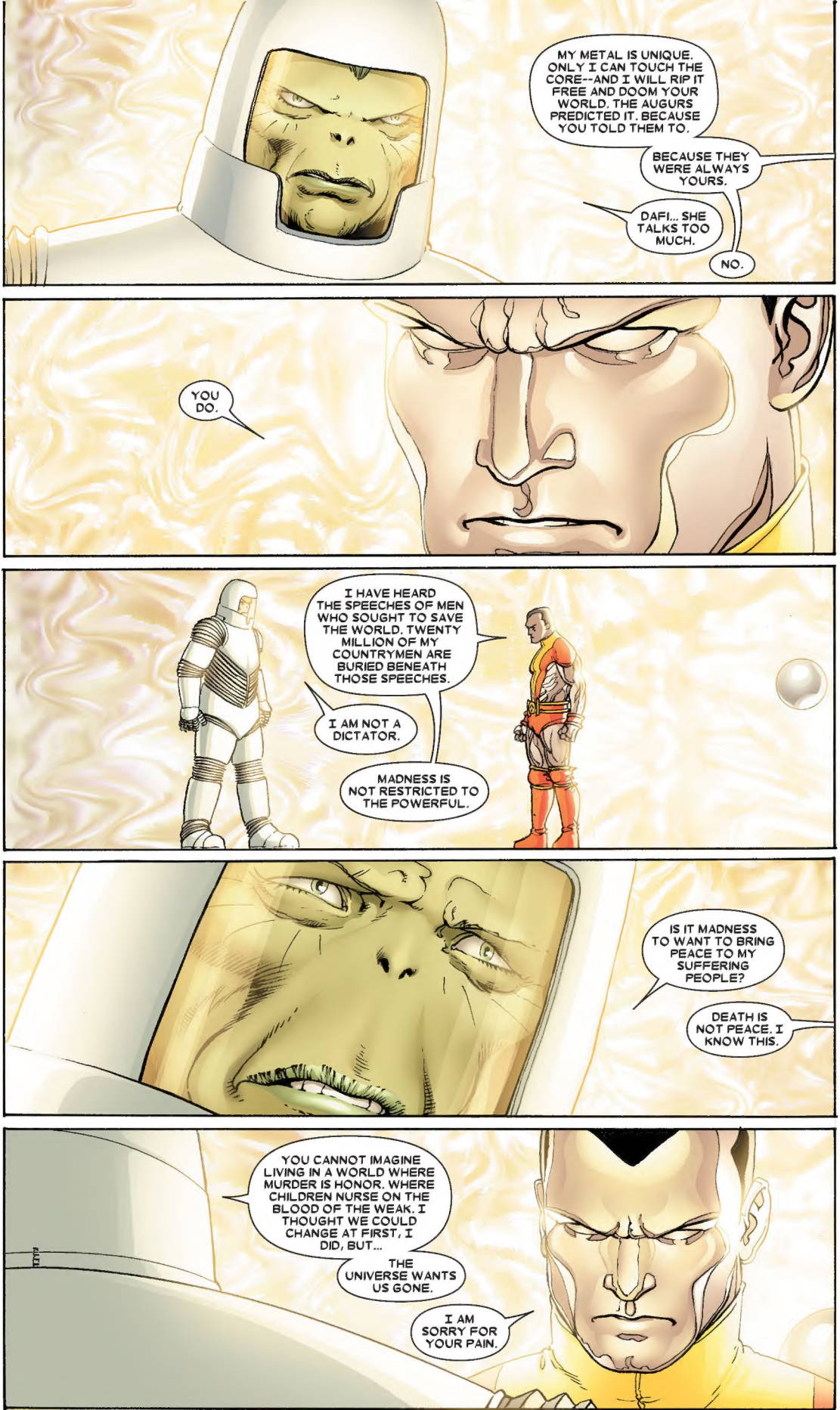
ANNND, SHRINKAGE.

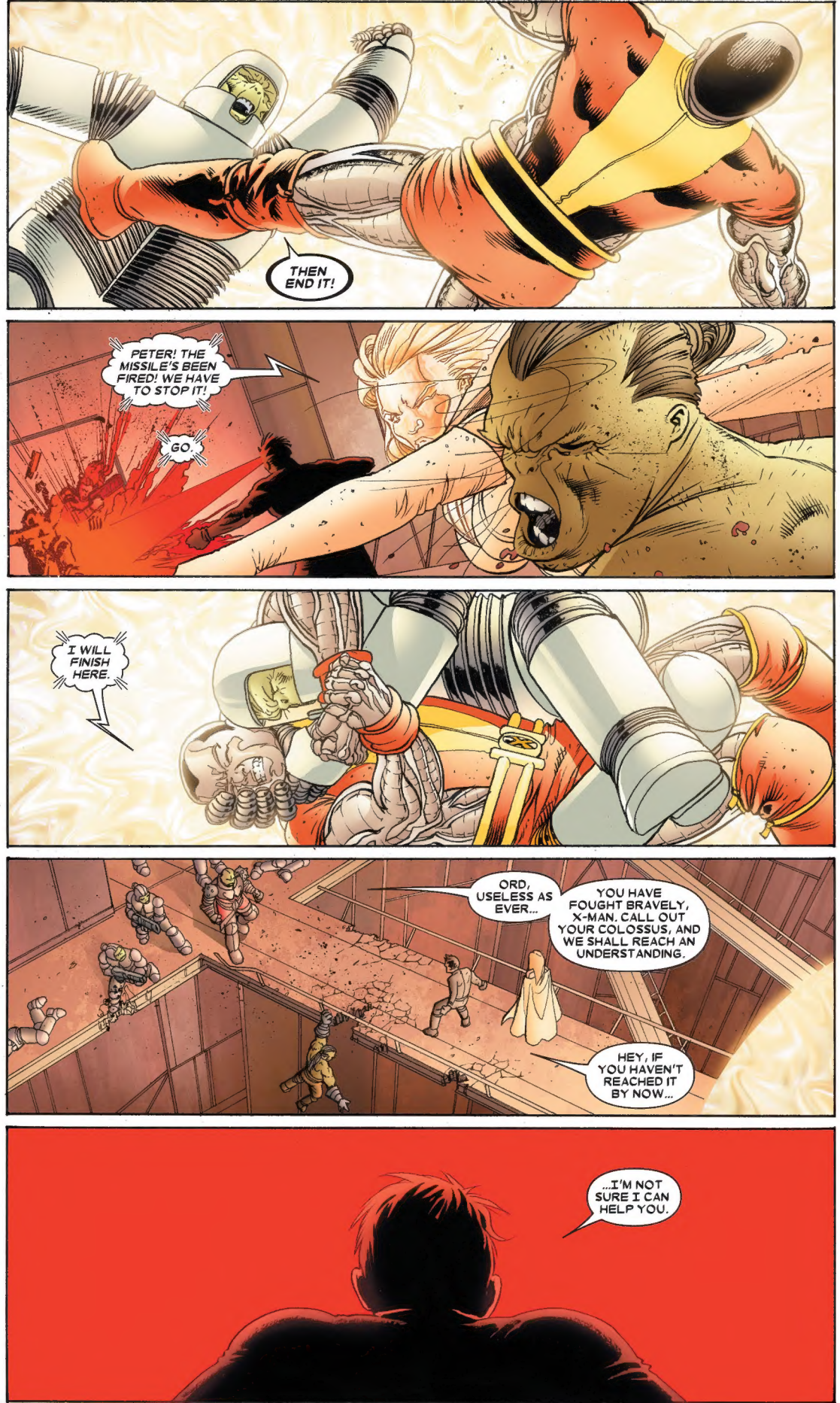
FELLOW HEROES! WE ARE ALL ASSEMBLED.

IF WE ARE TO ACT, WE MUST ACT IN CONCERT.

WHAT HAS HAPPENED?

GOD...
"HELP ME..."
I WILL KILL YOU ALL.


MY METAL IS UNIQUE. ONLY I CAN TOUCH THE CORE--AND I WILL RIP IT FREE AND DOOM YOUR WORLD. THE AUGURS PREDICTED IT. BECAUSE YOU TOLD THEM TO.
BECAUSE THEY WERE ALWAYS YOURS.
DAFI... SHE TALKS TOO MUCH.
NO.
YOU DO.
I HAVE HEARD THE SPEECHES OF MEN WHO SOUGHT TO SAVE THE WORLD. TWENTY MILLION OF MY COUNTRYMEN ARE BURIED BENEATH THOSE SPEECHES.
I AM NOT A DICTATOR.
MADNESS IS NOT RESTRICTED TO THE POWERFUL.
IS IT MADNESS TO WANT TO BRING PEACE TO MY SUFFERING PEOPLE?
DEATH IS NOT PEACE. I KNOW THIS.
YOU CANNOT IMAGINE LIVING IN A WORLD WHERE MURDER IS HONOR. WHERE CHILDREN NURSE ON THE BLOOD OF THE WEAK. I THOUGHT WE COULD CHANGE AT FIRST, I DID, BUT...
THE UNIVERSE WANTS US GONE.
I AM SORRY FOR YOUR PAIN.


THEN END IT!
PETER! THE MISSILE'S BEEN FIRED! WE HAVE TO STOP IT!
GO.
I WILL FINISH HERE.
ORD, USELESS AS EVER...
YOU HAVE FOUGHT BRAVELY, X-MAN. CALL OUT YOUR COLOSSUS, AND WE SHALL REACH AN UNDERSTANDING.
HEY, IF YOU HAVEN'T REACHED IT BY NOW...
...I'M NOT SURE I CAN HELP YOU.

YOU'RE AGENT BRAND. THE POWERLORD WILL REWARD US WELL FOR BRINGING YOU IN.
BUT YOU'LL REWARD US FIRST.
TWO THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT ME...
I NEVER GET GANG-RAPED ON A FIRST DATE...
AND "BRAND"...
AAAHH!!!
SSSZSSSZSS
...IS NOT MY GIVEN NAME.
AAAACHAAAAHHHH!!
KEH--
FSSSSSCK

AND TO THINK, I WASTED CONCERN.
WE SHOULD BE GOING AFTER KITTY.
WE CANNOT CATCH UP IN THIS VESSEL.
SCOTT AND EMMA ARE EN ROUTE, IN KRUUN'S FASTEST SHIP. WE NEED TO BACK UP PETER.
PETE SHOULD DO THE JOB AND GET OUT.
TELL ME I DIDN'T JUST HEAR YOU SUGGEST GENOCIDE.
WHAT DO YOU THINK THEY'RE TRYING TO DO TO US?
SUMMERS GETS CLOSE ENOUGH, HE CAN BOUNCE A MESSAGE TO THE PEAK, GET SOME OF EARTH'S MIGHTIEST HEROES WORKING THIS FROM THE OTHER END.
WE NEED TO TAKE ONE LAST SHOT AT KRUUN.
I CAN KILL HIM, RIGHT?
I GOT SOMETHING MORE DIPLOMATIC IN MIND.
PETER DOESN'T KNOW, DOES HE?
HE DOESN'T KNOW ABOUT KITTY.

IS ANYBODY...
...THERE...?
YES, THERE IT IS...
CLOSE?
I'M NOT ON A SPATIAL PLANE, TONY, AND I'M NOT AT MY PEAK. I'D APPRECIATE --
HAHHHHH...
SO, STRANGE IS DOWN...
GUESS THE "MAGICAL PROTECTION" WAS JUST PROTECTION AGAINST MAGIC.
LET'S DO THIS OLD SCHOOL.

TELL ME I GET TO HIT A ROCKET.
BUT THE PRYDE GIRL...
IF SHE CAN PHASE OUT AT JUST THE RIGHT MOMENT WE CAN PICK HER UP. BUT THE EARTH IS OUR FIRST PRIORITY.
I'VE GOT A PROTOTYPE FOR A DIMENSIONAL DISRUPTER IN THE CRAFT. IF WE GET THE TIMING RIGHT I CAN OPEN A RIFT AND SEND THAT BULLET RIGHT INTO THE NEGATIVE ZONE.
AND IF YOU GET THE TIMING WRONG?
BEN GETS TO HIT A ROCKET.
MY LORD...?
NO...

NO.
GAHH!
FOR SEVENTEEN YEARS I DID NOTHING BUT KILL.
NO STRENGTH, NO RIGHTEOUS RAGE, CAN MATCH ME. YOU WILL PULL THE CORE FROM ITS MOORING AND DROP IT INTO THE REACTOR...
OR I WILL USE YOUR ARMS MYSELF.

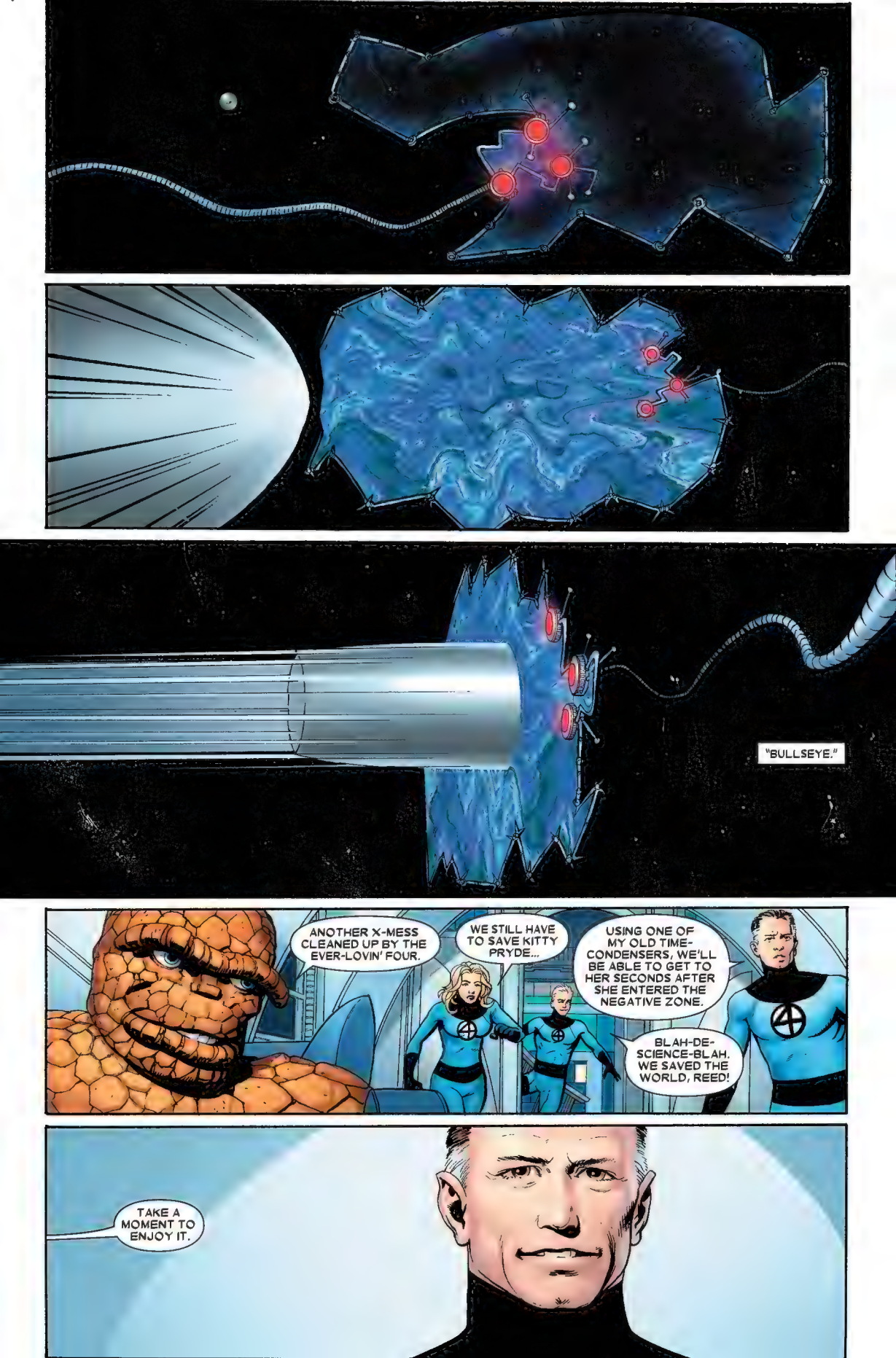
COME ON...
I CAN'T BE THAT WEAK...
"WE'VE LOST CONTACT WITH THE PEAK."
WE'RE SUDDENLY GETTING STATIC. AND YOU'RE BARELY SINGED.
SORRY I DIDN'T DIE TAKING THE HIT FOR YOU, PROFESSOR.
FIVE MINUTES TO DROP, PEOPLE.
YOU'RE KEEPING SOMETHING FROM ME.
MY FRIENDS-- MY WORLD--AT STAKE, AND YOU'RE STILL HIDING SOMETHING.
IT AIN'T RELEVANT.
I'LL DECIDE THAT.
IT'S PERSONAL.
AND HERE I AM IN YOUR PERSONAL SPACE SO GO AHEAD AND OPEN UP.
I AM SO HOT FOR YOU RIGHT NOW I COULD FRIKKIN' PASS OUT.
TOLD YOU IT WAS PERSONAL.

STOP RESISTING. YOU ONLY PROLONG IT.
YOU WON'T EVEN HAVE TO DIE!
YOU CAN BE WORLDS AWAY BEFORE THE END! AND YOU WILL BE A HERO.
YOU...HAVE NO CONCEPTION...
THE BREAKWORLD NEEDS TO END.
ONLY ME. MY METAL IS UNIQUE IN ALL THE UNIVERSE. TO SURVIVE THIS PLACE, TO SET OFF THE REACTION.
I WOULD NOT HAVE PLOTTED THESE LONG YEARS WERE IT NOT. CAN YOU NOT SEE? IT TRULY IS YOUR FATE!
NOT MY FATE.
MY METAL.
WHAT ARE YOU--
NOOOOO!!

I TOLD YOU TO DIE!
AAAHH!
SSSSSSSSS
YOU THOUGHT YOU SAW SOMEONE ENTERING?
JUST FOR A MOMENT--
WAS HE ARMORED UP?
USELESS DUPE!
AGGGKL--
I LOVE MY PEOPLE! I WILL SAVE MY PEOPLE FROM THE LIFE YOU INFLICT!
NO.

AAAIIEEEEE!!
YOU WILL NOT.
AAAAIIEERRRRRGK!HHHH
IS THAT WHO YOU SAW?
YOU'RE... KIDDING, RIGHT?
I... HLNNN...
ORD. YOU HAVE DONE IT. CAN YOU HEAR ME?
YOU HAVE SAVED THE WORLD.
"THIS IS GOING TO BE HARD."

THE PRECISION OF THE LAUNCH IS IMPRESSIVE--THE OBJECT ACTUALLY GAINED SPEED FROM THE GRAVITATIONAL SLINGSHOT AROUND DESURIS-BETA.
YA SAYING YER NEG-ZONE LASSO AIN'T GONNA WORK?
IT CAN...IF YOU CAN PUSH THIS SHIP HARDER THAN YOU EVER HAVE.
I CAN HOLD 'ER, BUT THE FUSION PUMPS'LL BURN IF I DON'T LAY OFF.
I CAN CONTROL THAT.
DON'T FRY THE WIRING, MATCHHEAD.
SUE, YOU'RE GOING TO HAVE TO PLACE THE GATE WITH A FORCE FIELD--WE CAN'T GET WITHIN A MILE OF THE OBJECT OR ITS RADIANT VELOCITY WAVES WILL FLATTEN US.
JUST GIVE THE WORD, DARLING.
EIGHT MINUTES OUT.
WE GET ONLY ONE SHOT.


"BULLSEYE."
ANOTHER X-MESS CLEANED UP BY THE EVER-LOVIN' FOUR.
WE STILL HAVE TO SAVE KITTY PRYDE...
USING ONE OF MY OLD TIME-CONDENSERS, WE'LL BE ABLE TO GET TO HER SECONDS AFTER SHE ENTERED THE NEGATIVE ZONE.
BLAH-DE-SCIENCE-BLAH. WE SAVED THE WORLD, REED!
TAKE A MOMENT TO ENJOY IT.

WE THROW EVERYTHING AT IT, IT WOULDN'T ALTER COURSE.
HELL, WE *RAM* THE THING WE'D JUST BE A BUG ON A WINDSHIELD.
UNLESS YOU'VE GOT A NOTION, EMMA, IT'S UP TO THE OTHERS.
EMMA?
KITTY?
EMMA?
KITTY. IT'S ALL RIGHT. HELP IS ON THE WAY.

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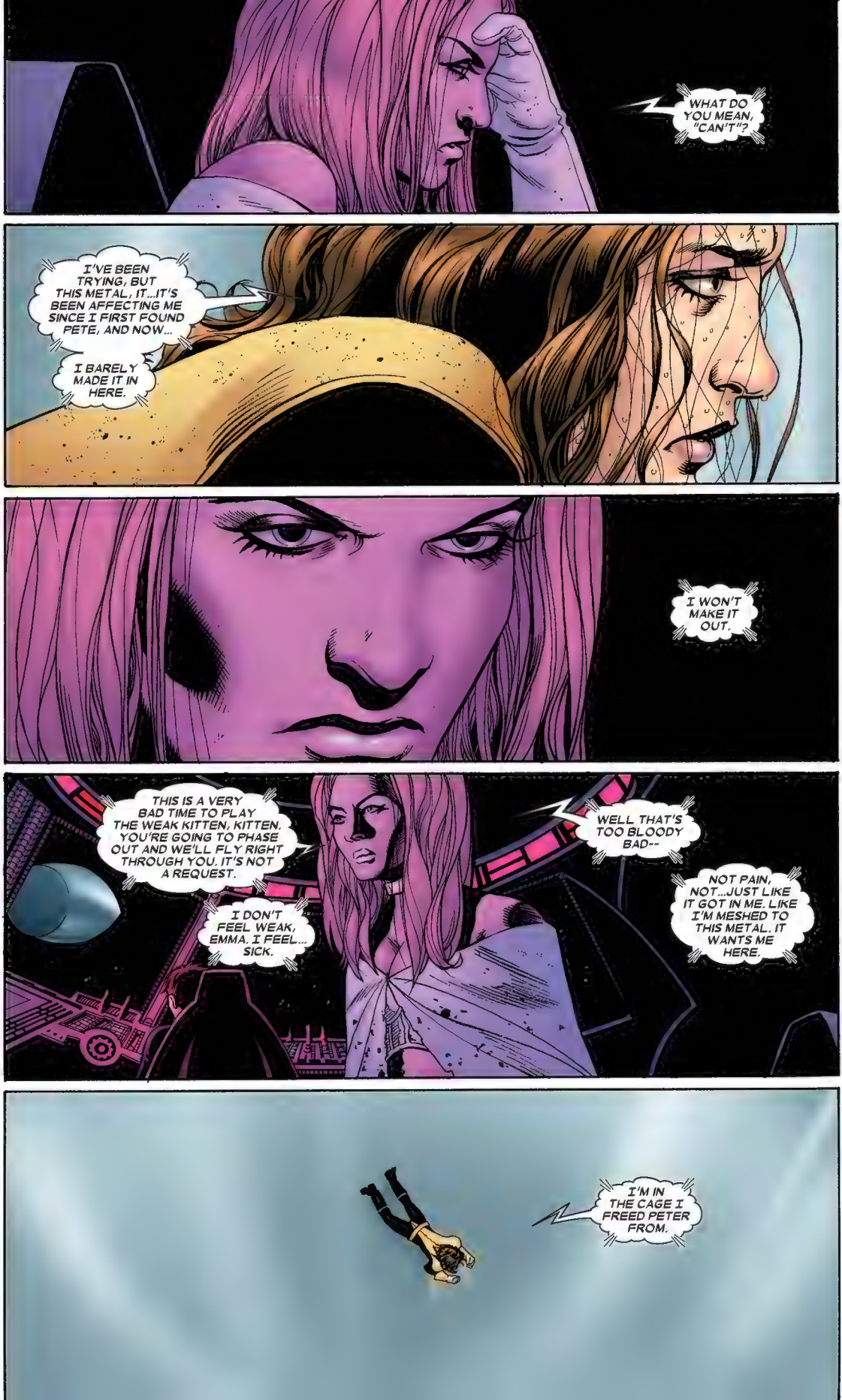
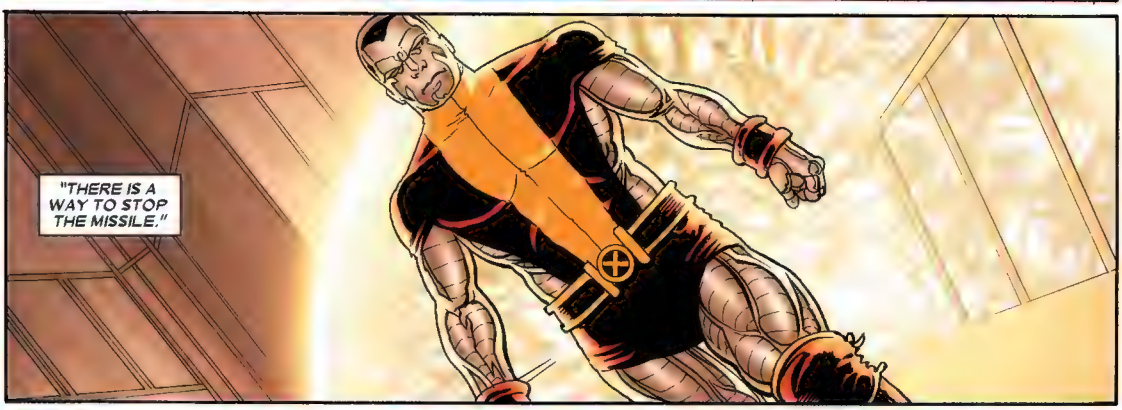
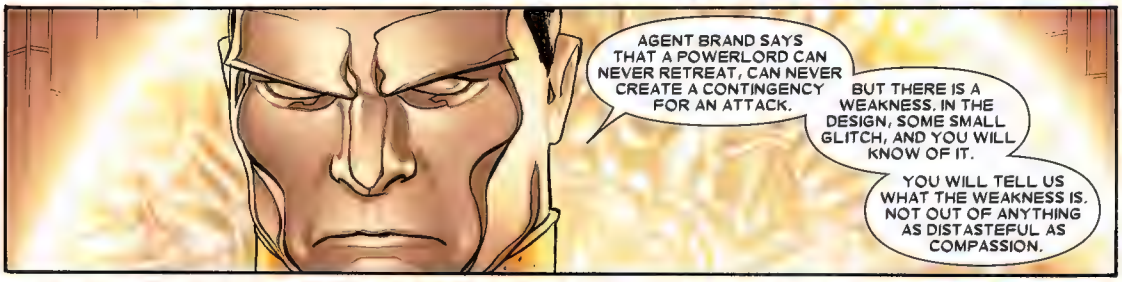

WHAT DO YOU MEAN, "CAN'T"?
I'VE BEEN TRYING, BUT THIS METAL, IT...IT'S BEEN AFFECTING ME SINCE I FIRST FOUND PETE, AND NOW...
I BARELY MADE IT IN HERE.
I WON'T MAKE IT OUT.
THIS IS A VERY BAD TIME TO PLAY THE WEAK KITTEN, KITTEN. YOU'RE GOING TO PHASE OUT AND WE'LL FLY RIGHT THROUGH YOU. IT'S NOT A REQUEST.
I DON'T FEEL WEAK, EMMA. I FEEL... SICK.
WELL THAT'S TOO BLOODY BAD--
NOT PAIN, NOT...JUST LIKE IT GOT IN ME. LIKE I'M MESHED TO THIS METAL. IT WANTS ME HERE.
I'M IN THE CAGE I FREED PETER FROM.

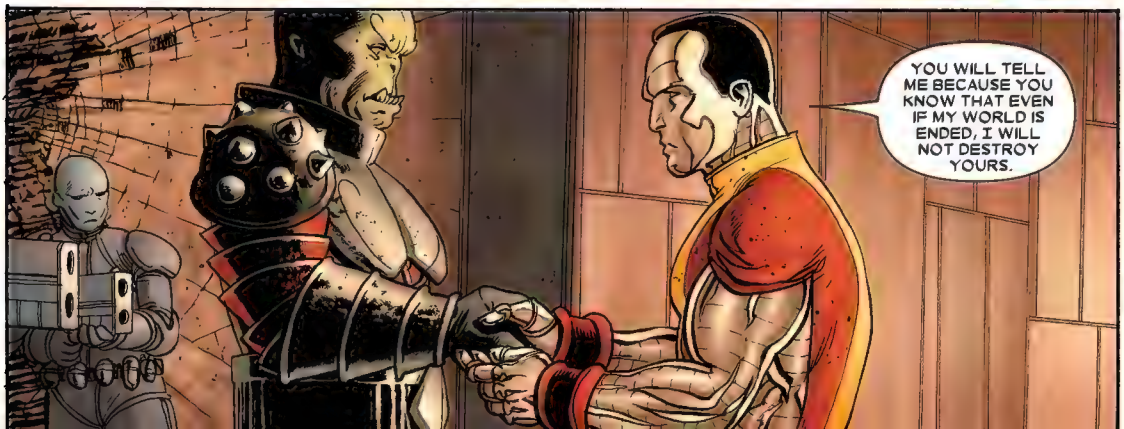
KITTY, YOU KNOW ANY HOPE WE HAVE OF STOPPING THIS THING...
I KNOW.
I KNOW.
AAH!
YOU DARE?
SORRRY SORRY SORRY... DON'T HURRICANE ME...
DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA WHAT I JUST--
YOU SAVED THE WORLD, RIGHT?
YOU STOPPED A TEN-MILE METEOR WITH A GREAT BIG BREEZE, AM I CLOSE?
I... SAVED...
YEAH.

SO DID THEY.

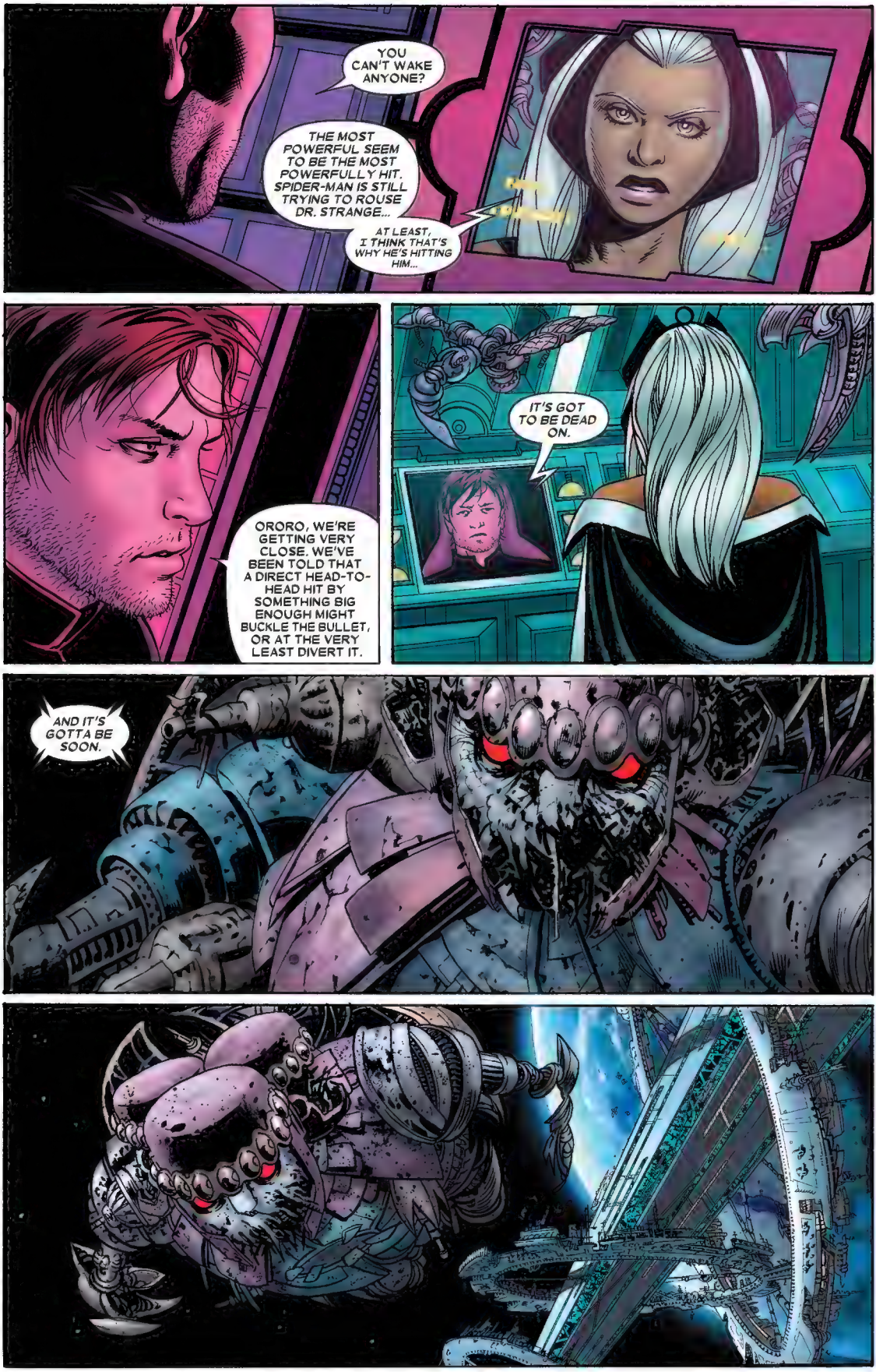

"THERE IS A WAY TO STOP THE MISSILE."

IT IS NO MERE MISSILE--
MY FRIENDS HAVE TOLD ME.
EVERYTHING.

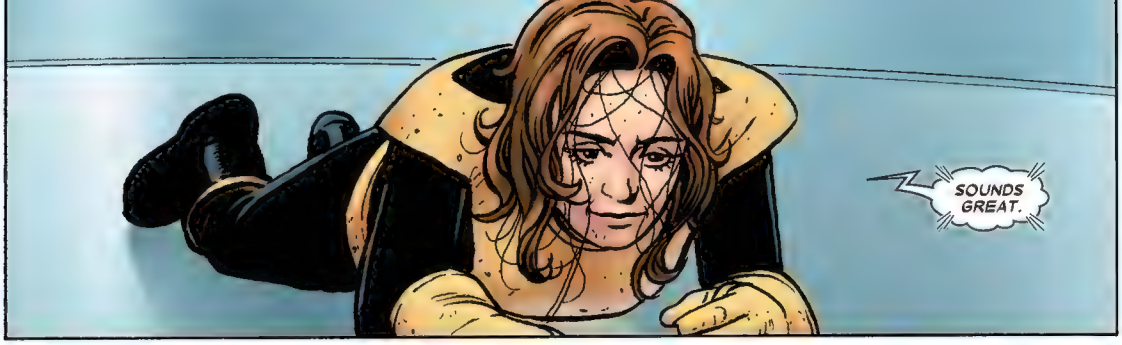

AGENT BRAND SAYS THAT A POWERLORD CAN NEVER RETREAT, CAN NEVER CREATE A CONTINGENCY FOR AN ATTACK.
BUT THERE IS A WEAKNESS. IN THE DESIGN, SOME SMALL GLITCH, AND YOU WILL KNOW OF IT.
YOU WILL TELL US WHAT THE WEAKNESS IS. NOT OUT OF ANYTHING AS DISTASTEFUL AS COMPASSION.

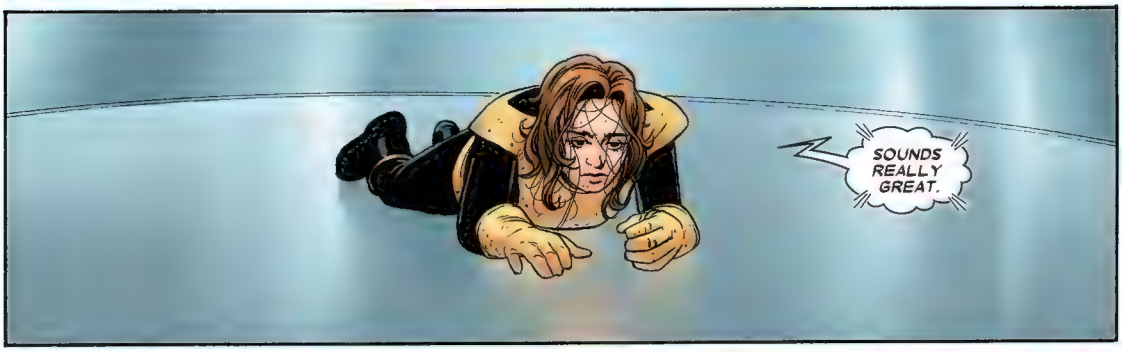

YOU WILL TELL ME BECAUSE YOU KNOW THAT EVEN IF MY WORLD IS ENDED, I WILL NOT DESTROY YOURS.

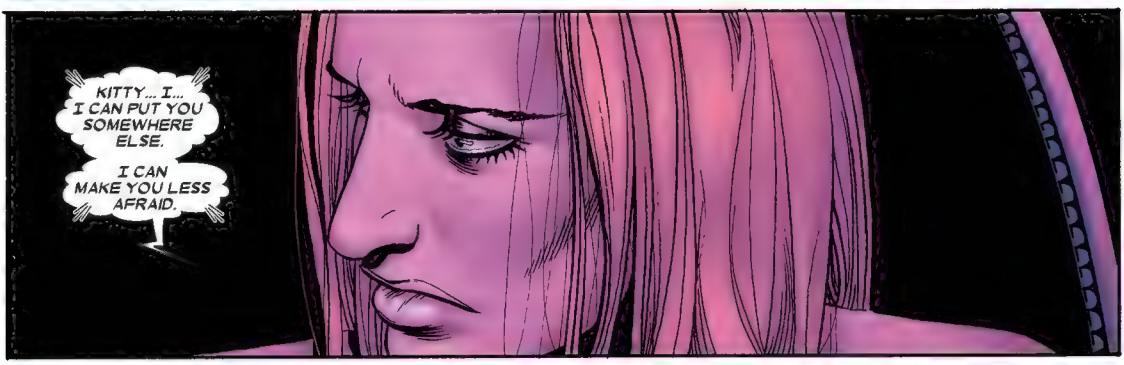
AAAHHGHHH!!
I WILL RULE IT.
MY PEOPLE WOULD NEVER...
YOUR PEOPLE FEAR ME AS THEY NEVER WILL YOU. I AM THE DESTROYER.
AND ACCORDING TO AGENT BRAND, I HOLD THE SYMBOL OF YOUR SERVITUDE IN MY HAND. YOUR TIME IS DONE.
WE LOSE THE EARTH, WE'RE GONNA NEED A PLACE TO CRASH. FOREVER.
YOU'RE NOT POWERLORD ANYMORE. YOU NO LONGER BEAR THE BURDEN OF HIS SECRETS. SO UNLESS YOU WANT YOUR WORLD OVERRUN BY A HOST OF VERY UNHAPPY SUPERPEOPLE, USE YOUR NEW FREEDOM.
WHAT IS THE WEAKNESS?

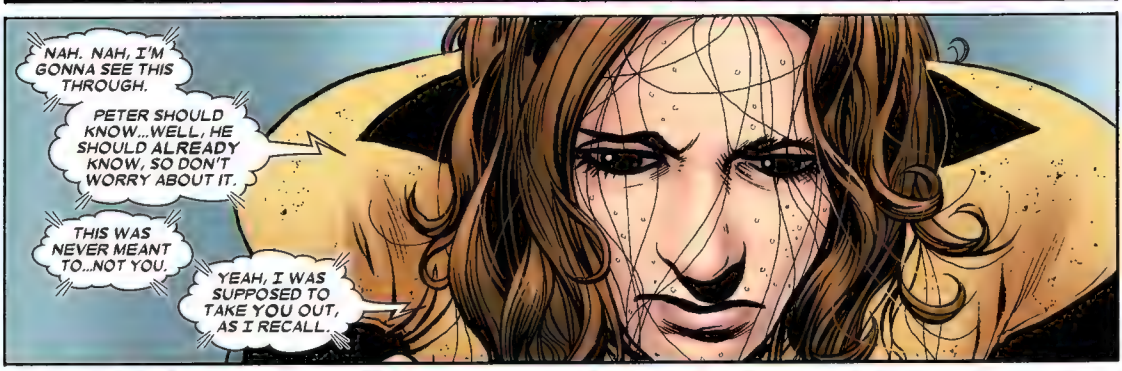

YOU CAN'T WAKE ANYONE?
THE MOST POWERFUL SEEM TO BE THE MOST POWERFULLY HIT. SPIDER-MAN IS STILL TRYING TO ROUSE DR. STRANGE...
AT LEAST, I THINK THAT'S WHY HE'S HITTING HIM...
ORORO, WE'RE GETTING VERY CLOSE. WE'VE BEEN TOLD THAT A DIRECT HEAD-TO-HEAD HIT BY SOMETHING BIG ENOUGH MIGHT BUCKLE THE BULLET, OR AT THE VERY LEAST DIVERT IT.
IT'S GOT TO BE DEAD ON.
AND IT'S GOTTA BE SOON.

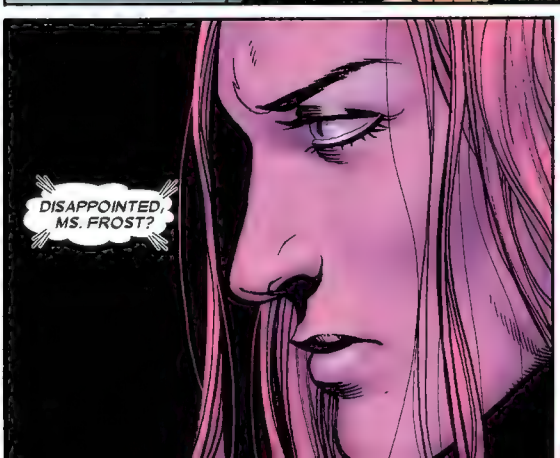
I AM RESPONSIBLE FOR THE DEATHS OF MILLIONS.
I HAVE SINCE BEEN GIVEN LIFE, AND AN UNDERSTANDING OF WHAT MY LIFE MEANS.
"I HOPE THAT I AM HELPFUL."
SO. CAN'T BE MUCH LONGER, RIGHT?
WE'RE TRYING TO PUT SOMETHING IN BETWEEN YOU AND THE EARTH.
WE DON'T KNOW IF IT'LL WORK, BUT EITHER WAY...FEEL LIKE PHASING OUT OF THERE? SAY, OH, ABOUT NOW?


SOUNDS GREAT.


SOUNDS REALLY GREAT.


KITTY... I... I CAN PUT YOU SOMEWHERE ELSE.
I CAN MAKE YOU LESS AFRAID.

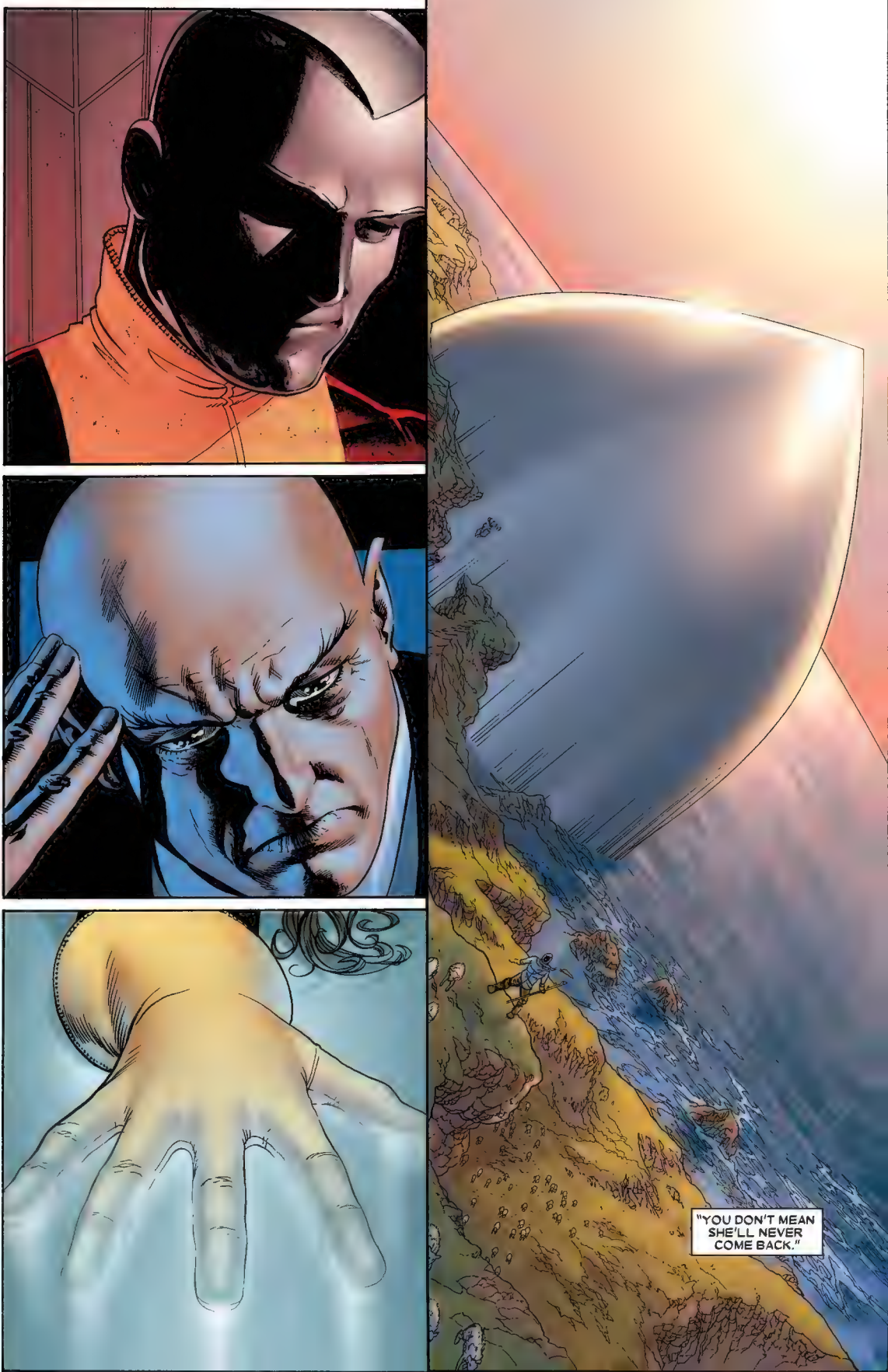

NAH. NAH, I'M GONNA SEE THIS THROUGH.
PETER SHOULD KNOW...WELL, HE SHOULD ALREADY KNOW, SO DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT.
THIS WAS NEVER MEANT TO...NOT YOU.
YEAH, I WAS SUPPOSED TO TAKE YOU OUT, AS I RECALL.


DISAPPOINTED, MS. FROST?

ASTONISHED, MS. PRYDE.

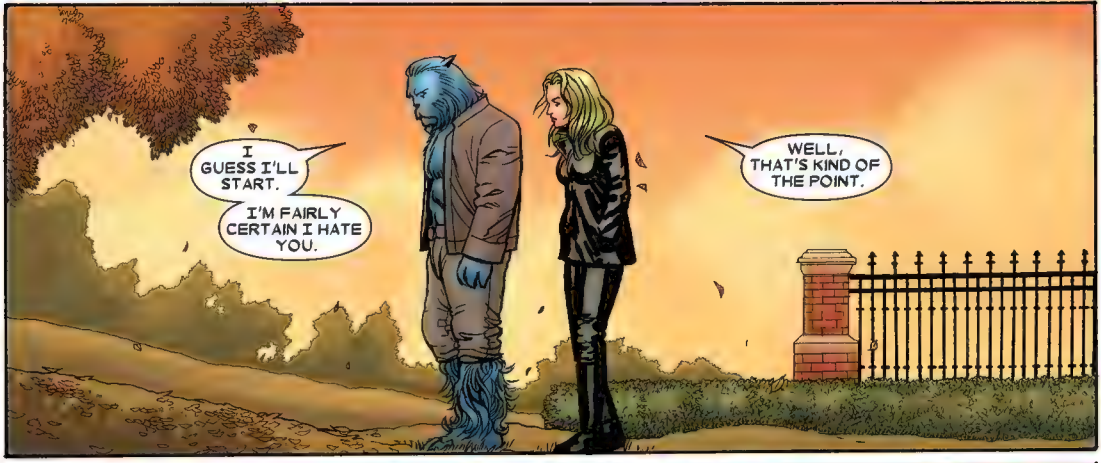
GOD...
WE GOT ONE MINUTE HERE!
MAGIC! NOW! COME ON!
SOMEBODY DO SOME MAGIC...
GIVE ME STRENGTH.

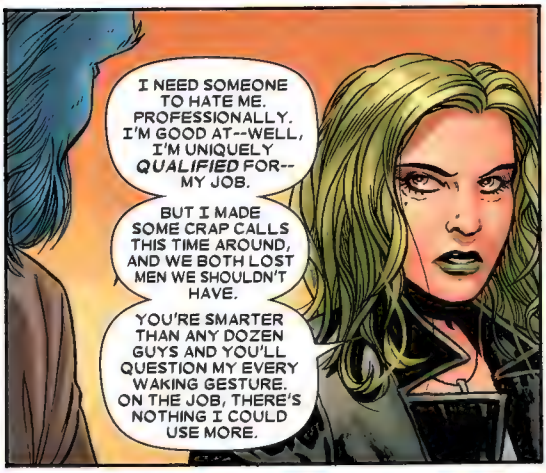
COMA-COLA
NO ACCOUNTING FOR TASTE!!!!!!!!


"YOU DON'T MEAN SHE'LL NEVER COME BACK."

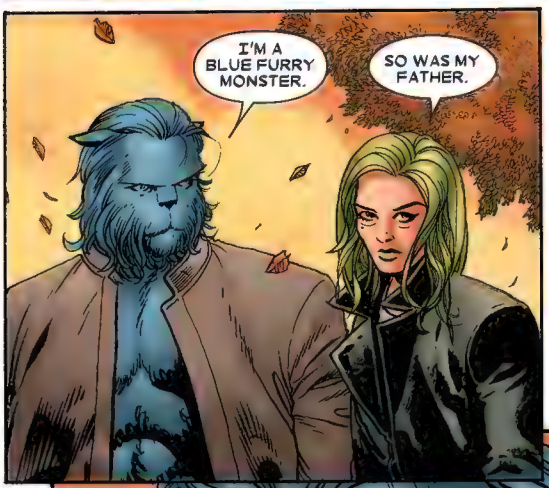
WHAT THEY TELL ME...
STRANGE, RICHARDS, ALL THE..."*TOP MEN*"...THEY FIGURE SHE'S BONDED WITH THE BULLET. THAT SIZE, IT'S THE ONLY WAY SHE COULD'VE...
AND EVEN IF SHE COULD BREAK THE CONNECTION, THE BULLET MIGHT BE IN THE MIDDLE OF A PLANET. OR IT'LL HIT ONE, SOONER OR LATER, BEFORE OR AFTER SHE COULD PHASE OUT...
ASSUMING SHE'S EVEN STRICTLY ALIVE.
EVERY MOMENT WE TALK, SHE'S FURTHER AWAY. SURELY DOCTOR STRANGE, OR RICHARDS CAN--
THEY'VE TRIED.
WHICH IS NOT TO SAY THEY WON'T *KEEP* TRYING, BUT...
"SHOULDN'T'A BEEN HER."

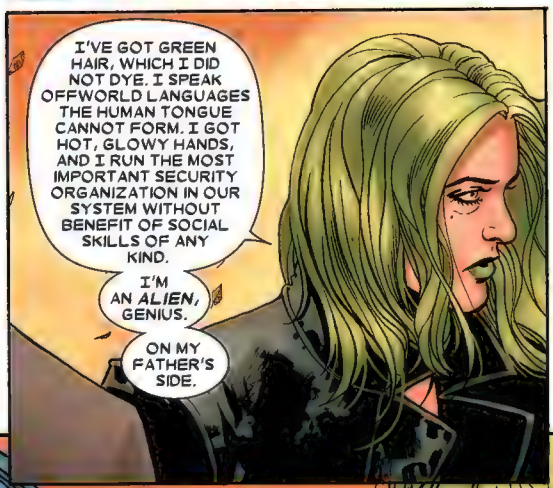
CAN I HELP?
ARE YOU A BEER?
ALL OUR CRAP...HOW'D IT FALL ON HER SHOULDERS?
HER AND PETE, THEY... THEY WERE LIKE...TWO...
CRAAK!
I'M SORRY. YOU WERE ABOUT TO BECOME POETIC, AND I THOUGHT WE'D BOTH PREFER YOU DIDN'T.
KID...
YOU WANT TO GRIEVE.
AND I NEED TO TRAIN.
I CAN PIERCE THAT ARMOR, KID.
YOU CAN TRY.


I GUESS I'LL START.
I'M FAIRLY CERTAIN I HATE YOU.
WELL, THAT'S KIND OF THE POINT.


I NEED SOMEONE TO HATE ME. PROFESSIONALLY. I'M GOOD AT--WELL, I'M UNIQUELY *QUALIFIED* FOR-- MY JOB.
BUT I MADE SOME CRAP CALLS THIS TIME AROUND, AND WE BOTH LOST MEN WE SHOULDN'T HAVE.
YOU'RE SMARTER THAN ANY DOZEN GUYS AND YOU'LL QUESTION MY EVERY WAKING GESTURE. ON THE JOB, THERE'S NOTHING I COULD USE MORE.

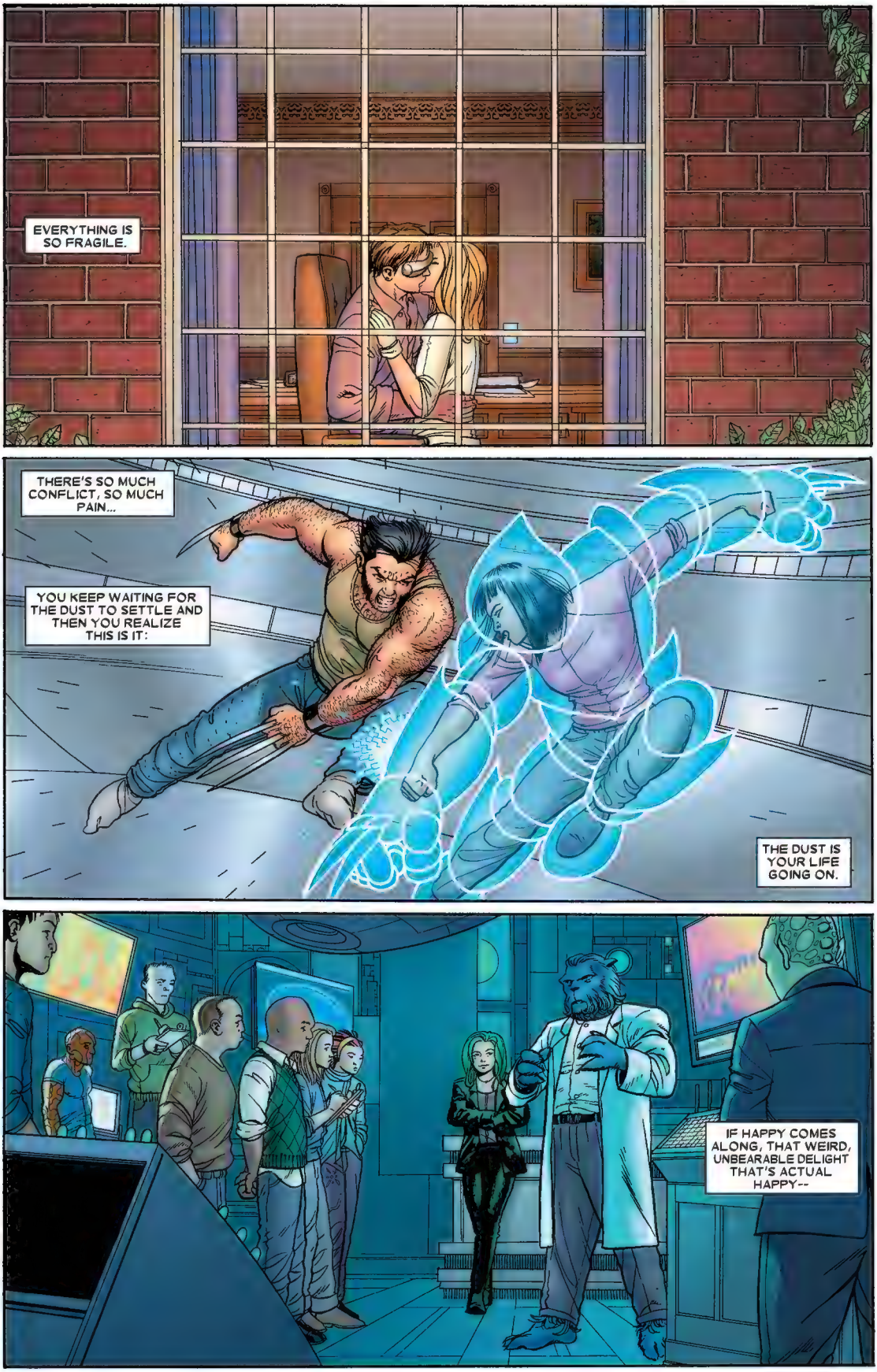
AND OFF THE JOB?
PRETTY MUCH WANNA BREAK YOU LIKE A PONY. IT'S A WIN-WIN.


I'M A BLUE FURRY MONSTER.
SO WAS MY FATHER.


I'VE GOT GREEN HAIR, WHICH I DID NOT DYE. I SPEAK OFFWORLD LANGUAGES THE HUMAN TONGUE CANNOT FORM. I GOT HOT, GLOWY HANDS, AND I RUN THE MOST IMPORTANT SECURITY ORGANIZATION IN OUR SYSTEM WITHOUT BENEFIT OF SOCIAL SKILLS OF ANY KIND.
I'M AN *ALIEN*, GENIUS.
ON MY FATHER'S SIDE.

THIS IS A HARD TIME FOR YOU, SO I'M NOT GONNA PUSH, BUT...
THE SAFETY OF THE ENTIRE PLANET PROBABLY RESTS ON YOUR DECISION AND YOU AND I ARE COMPATIBLE IN WAYS YOU DON'T HAVE WORDS FOR, SO...
...SO I'M NOT GONNA PUSH.

EMMA.
IT'S TIME.
I'M AMAZED YOU HELD IT AS LONG AS YOU DID.
CLARITY. IT WAS A BEAUTIFUL GIFT. BUT IT'LL GO, AND I DON'T WANT TO WAIT FOR THAT.
YOUR EYES ARE RED.
LOOK WHO'S TALKING.
I LOVE YOU.
I LOVE YOU TOO.


EVERYTHING IS SO FRAGILE.
THERE'S SO MUCH CONFLICT, SO MUCH PAIN...
YOU KEEP WAITING FOR THE DUST TO SETTLE AND THEN YOU REALIZE THIS IS IT:
THE DUST IS YOUR LIFE GOING ON.
IF HAPPY COMES ALONG, THAT WEIRD, UNBEARABLE DELIGHT THAT'S ACTUAL HAPPY--

"I THINK YOU HAVE TO GRAB IT WHILE YOU CAN.
"YOU TAKE WHAT YOU CAN GET.
"CAUSE IT'S HERE, AND THEN..."

GONE
WHEDON CASSADAY MARTIN ELIOPOULOS PANZO LOWE QUESADA BUCKLEY

COVER GALLERY

As a special bonus here are a few of our favorite variant covers, which you might have missed the first time.

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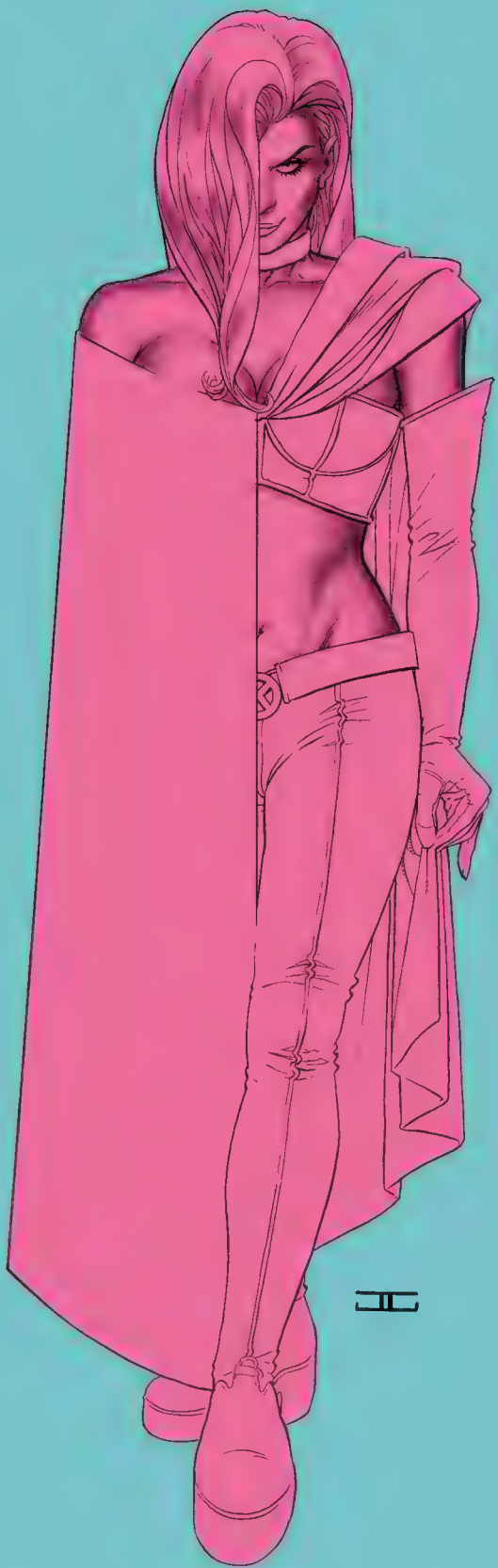

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Astonishing X-Men Saga

Megan